

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-14 ISO-00 SCCT-02 SY-04 USSS-00

SSO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 M-02 A-01 L-03

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 PA-04 USIA-15

DRC-01 /139 W

----- 040530

P R 081230Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8480

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 1619

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS SU

SUBJ: RELEASE BSO TERRORISTS - SUDANESE REACTION

REF: KHARTOUM 1538

1. SUMMARY: AFTER INITIAL FLURRY OF GOVERNMENT TO GIVE IMPRESSION WIDE SPREAD SUPPORT NIMEIRI'S DECISION RELEASE TERRORISTS, SUBJECT HAS GENERALLY DROPPED FROM PUBLIC EYE. PRIVATELY IT OUR IMPRESSION, THAT SUDANESE FEEL PRECIPITOUS NATURE DECISION WAS MISTAKE. AS FOR WHERE WE GO FROM HERE, SUDANESE MOST APPEAR REALIZE THAT MATTER HAS NOT ENDED, WITH REACTIONS VARYING FROM "CORRECT" TO SKITTISHNESS IN CONTACT WITH US. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE GOS IS NOT ANTICIPATING ITS NEXT MOVE, WAITING INSTEAD FOR SPECIFIC USG REACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. TWO WEEKS SINCE RELEASE KHARTOUM TERRORISTS HAS SEEN LITTLE IN WAY CONCRETE REACTION EITHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE TO PRESIDENT NIMEIRI'S DECISION. GOVERNMENT DID IN FIRST
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FEW DAYS FOLLOWING DEPARTURE SEEK DEMONSTRATE THAT

DECISION SUPPORTED AT HOME AND ABROAD. THIS INCLUDED REPORTS IN PRESS OF CABLES OF SUPPORT TO NIMEIRI FROM BOTH SUDANESE CITIZENS AND FOREIGN ENTITIES. IT ALSO SEEN IN SPEECH BY SPEAKER OF PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY BEFORE THAT BODY IN WHICH HE HIGHLIGHTED SUDAN'S SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND PRAISED "WISE" DECISION TAKEN BY PRESIDENT TO RELEASE TERRORISTS. THIS SPEECH THEN OFFICIALLY ENDORSED UNANIMOUSLY AS VIEW OF ASSEMBLY. WITHIN FIRST WEEK, HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT HAD COMPLETELY DROPPED ISSUE AND NIMEIRI HIMSELF MADE NO MENTION THEREOF DURING HIS MONTHLY "FACE THE NATION" BROADCAST NIGHT JULY 7.

3. IN PRIVATE CONTACTS, EMBOFFS HAVE RECEIVED RELATIVELY FEW COMMENTS FROM SUDANESE ACQUAINTANCES. THOSE THAT HAVE BEEN MADE, HOWEVER, HAVE GENERALLY INDICATED THAT SUBJECT VERY MUCH ON PUBLIC MIND AND THAT, CONTRARY TO IMPRESSION GOVERNMENT SOUGHT GIVE, MANY PEOPLE DO NOT RPT NOT APPROVE OF MANNER IN WHICH PRESIDENT ACTED. ACTION BY PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY, FOR EXAMPLE, WE ARE TOLD WAS RAILROADED THROUGH. MEMBERS FACED WITH SITUATION WHERE ITEM NOT EVEN ON AGENDA WAS SUDDENLY PRESENTED AND THEY THEN FACED WITH CHOICE, "DO YOU OR DO YOU NOT SUPPORT PRESIDENT?" TO WHICH THERE COULD BE ONLY ONE ANSWER. WE TEND BELIEVE THAT, WHILE SUCH REPORTS HAVE ELEMENT CLASSIC CASE OF TELLING US WHAT WE WANT HEAR, THAT IN THIS CASE THEY PROBABLY GENERALLY ACCURATE AND THAT SILENCE OF MAJORITY OF CONTACTS DOES NOT REFLECT LACK OF CONCERN OR APPROVAL OF RELEASE BUT RATHER ACUTE EMBARRASSMENT AND FEELING THAT THERE IS NOTHING CONSTRUCTIVE BE SAID. ONE MUST ADD, HOWEVER, THAT SUDANESE CRITICISM OF RELEASE HAS ITS LIMITS. IN GENERAL, THERE IS SYMPATHY BOTH FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND PRESSURES UNDER WHICH NIMEIRI ACTED. BUT FEELING IS THAT WHILE RELEASE AT SOME POINT IN FUTURE--AND PERIOD MENTIONED RANGE FROM FEW WEEKS TO YEAR OR TWO--TO BE EXPECTED AND JUSTIFIED, IMMEDIATE HANDOVER AS OCCURRED WAS WRONG.

4. AS FOR WHAT HAPPENS NEXT AND WHAT GOS STANCE SHOULD BE, THERE IS CLEARLY DEGREE CONFUSION. SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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GOS OFFICIALS INCLUDING OUR MINFOREIGN AFFAIRS CONTACTS ACT AS IF NOTHING CHANGED AND CONTINUE ASK EMBASSY FOR ASSISTANCE IN VARIOUS MATTERS. OUR US BUSINESS CONTACTS, INCLUDING SOME WHO HAVE SEEN PRESIDENT IN PAST TWO WEEKS, REPORT NO CHANGE IN ATTITUDE OR SLACKENING OF INTEREST ON PART GOS IN PURSUING CONTACTS WITH US PRIVATE SECTOR. ON OTHER HAND, AS REPORTED EARLIER THROUGH USIS CHANNELS, THERE HAS BEEN

ALMOST TOTAL EMBARGO PLACED ON USE USIS MEDIA MATERIAL. AND, WHILE IT PROBABLY JUST CASE SOMEWHAT SLIPSHOD SUDANESE MANNER, MINLOCAL GOVERNMENT, WHO HAD EARLIER ACCEPTED AMBASSADOR'S INVITATION ADDRESS EMBASSY IN-HOUSE GATHERING EVENING JULY 8 ON SUBJECT GOS POLITICAL STRUCTURE, NEGLECTED INFORM US UNTIL WE ASKED THAT HE WOULD INSTEAD BY OUT OF KHARTOUM ON PROVINCIAL VISIT WITH NIMEIRI.

5. OVERALL IT OUR IMPRESSION THAT MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE SUDANESE, IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT, KNOW THAT MORE IS TO COME--THAT USG HAS NOT YET SAID ITS PIECE. FACED WITH THIS SITUATION SOME CONTINUE REACT "CORRECTLY" AS DOES EMBASSY, WHILE OTHERS DISPLAY GREATER DEGREE OF NERVOUSNESS AND UNCERTAINTY. WE SEE NO EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, DESPITE ACTION GOS MEDIA REPS, THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY DECISION TAKEN AT THIS POINT TO FOLLOW GENERALLY ANTI-AMERICAN LINE. INSTEAD NEXT MOVE BEING LEFT UP TO USG. SANDERSON

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